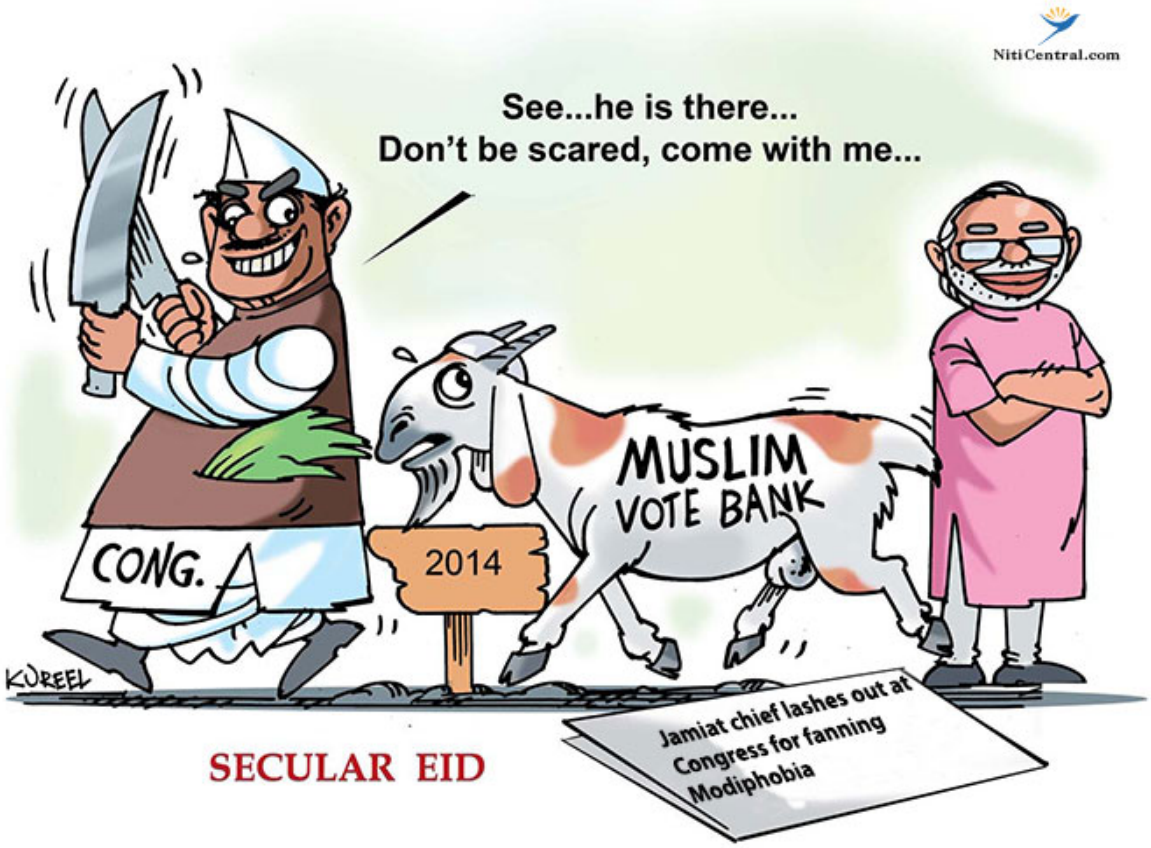

Political Hurdle to Indian Nationalism

By BS Murthy

The raise of Narendra Modi in the Indian political firmament has brought to the fore the debate on nationalism and anti-nationalism, like never before, and that too with a rare patriotic fervor. With the unfolding events in Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University, it's as if the 'secular' left and the 'Hindu' right have drawn battle lines for what could be a decisive ideological war on the Indian patriotic front. While the hitherto ideologically muzzled majority is shrill over the campus ranting of *'bharat ki barbaadi'* as an anti-national activity, the religiously-rooted minorities, backed by high-decibel left-liberals, have come to articulate that 'Afzal teri katil zindahai' sloganeering is just an instance of 'free speech', that too enshrined in the constitution. Contrast this with the universal taboo on Nazi symbolisms that ironically include the Hindu Swastika, imaginatively 'tilted' by Adolf Hitler for artistic affect. And all this is so long after our British colonial masters had granted us the right to breathe our own 'fresh' air.

If Gandhi's Congress, in the main, conceived a social structure for free India, mainly it's Nehru, who had designed and built our political edifice. And if a dwelling turns out to be unwieldy for living in it, blame the intellect of architect for it, but if it develops cracks, shouldn't the builder be brought to book? And it's a double jeopardy for India that not only the premise of the design was unrealistic but the material of construction was unsound. Before going into the genesis of our patriotic paradox, it is

imperative to understand what nationalism is all about and who is an anti-national for that matter. The dictionary defines nationalism as the spirit or aspirations common to *the whole of a nation* and an anti national as the one who is opposed to national interests or nationalism.

Name it Bharat that is India or *Ila Varta* or *Arya Varta*, this ancient land had all along been a nation of nations as parts of it were kingdoms with distinctive political boundaries though culturally unified. That was before foreign forces came to set up their sultanates. Though the entry of the Afghans and the Turks did not sunder the land, the Islamic surge they occasioned had culturally divided the people, eventually resulting in the country's partition for the Muslim accommodation. Add to it the British mischief that left it to the rajahs and sultans to take their fiefdoms whichever way they wanted, so to say, nipped the evolution of Indian nationalism in its bud. While an ailing Sardar's patriotic energies were consumed in creating an Indian political entity, he died before he could infuse a national unity into it. But sadly for India, Nehru messed up Patel's unfinished job.

What with the Muslim classes having left for Pakistan, leaving behind the Islamic masses, the supercilious Nehru took it upon himself to play the role of an unsolicited Mullah. Be that as it may, had he energized himself to improve their economic plight and rationalize their fundamentalist mindset, as he tried in case of the Hindu majority, he would have served India well. But instead, he took the easy route (the lazy man) to humour them by catering to their religious instincts and separatist psyche, thereby keeping them away from the Indian nationalist mainstream. And beginning with his daughter, Indira, as the unscrupulous politicians in the cow belt saw the electoral dividends catering to the Muslim religious sentiments fetched, never mind its inimical impact on the community at large, more so its women folks, vote bank politics took deep roots to ruin the nation that, any way, was never in the making.

The sum and substance of this political zero sum game is that it not only hinders the entry of the Musalman into the national mainstream but also stymies his personal well-being through ghettoized thinking. That Muslims should fall prey to this Machiavellian deception packaged as secularism for electoral consumption is the bane of the Indian democracy. It's thus; the cynical secularism of the self-serving politicians that won't allow us to inculcate the spirit and aspirations common to us as the citizens of *the whole of India* is the hurdle to our nationalism.